



INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

EDITION OF THE YEAR 2024

The 20 best articles of the year

Compiled by Helen Anderson

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Inspire Youth Journal, a global platform for youth journalism founded and led by Anh La, is a monthly publication that showcases outstanding articles by talented students from around the world, addressing current global issues.



INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

INTRODUCTION

Inspire Youth Journal presents its edition of the year: a special release to highlight the very best articles we have received in 2024. This edition includes twenty articles by twenty different writers who have written articles that we felt were the most informative, clear, engaging, and articulate to effectively educate young people around the world on pressing current issues. All of our published articles and submissions have been reviewed in depth to find the very best ones that were holistically exceptional.

Inspire Youth Journal would like to congratulate all of the writers whose articles have been selected and would like to highlight the skill that each one of these articles showcases. For those who were not selected, we still recognize the time and effort that goes into all of the pieces we publish. Keep writing and we hope you find success in following years or other endeavors. Finally, we'd like to thank all of the featured authors, other Inspire Youth Journal submitters, designers, editors, and dedicated readers as your hard work and contributions are what make this journal possible.



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NO RECOGNITION, NO RETREAT: THE CASE OF SOMALILAND

Morgan Dinh



You've probably heard of Somalia—a country too often associated with instability, conflict, and piracy in the Horn of Africa. But to its northwest lies a place that defies this narrative: Somaliland. Tucked away in the Horn of Africa, this de facto state has spent over three decades pursuing international recognition.

Historical Foundations of Independence

Somaliland's identity, as a distinct region within the broader Somali context, can be traced back to the late 19th century. Under British administration as a protectorate, the territory operated separately from Britain until gaining independence in June 1960. Just five days later, it united with the territory of present-day Somalia, which had been governed by Italy, to form the Somali Republic. However, the union was fraught with tension from the outset, as many in Somaliland opposed the concentration of power in the southern part of the country.

Discontent simmered as political and economic marginalization of Somaliland's northern regions grew under the central government in Mogadishu. The situation deteriorated further during the rule of Somali dictator Siad Barre, who had come to power through a military coup in 1969. Between 1987 and 1989, Siad Barre's regime carried out widespread atrocities against the Isaaq clan, the dominant group in Somalia's northwestern region. Approximately 200,000 Isaaq people were killed in what is now recognized as a brutal campaign to suppress their push for independence. Experts estimate that Somaliland is now home to over 200 mass graves, with a significant number concentrated in an area grimly known as the Valley of Death.

Barre's genocidal campaign also included the bombing of Hargeisa, now Somaliland's capital, killing over 40,000 people and leaving the city in ruins.

During this time, anger and resentment towards Barre's regime gave rise to the Somali National Movement (SNM), an armed and formidable opposition group based in Somaliland. They fought tirelessly to overthrow Barre's regime. In January 1991, Barre's regime was finally ended by a coalition of insurgent groups, including the SNM. However, discord among these factions prevented the establishment of a unified interim government. Rejecting the authority of the new administration led by rival militias, the SNM declared Somaliland's independence in May 1991, with Hargeisa designated as its capital.

The declaration marked the beginning of a new chapter for Somaliland— one defined by a steadfast commitment to building peace and stability within its borders.

The subsequent decade saw Somaliland embark on a challenging journey to solidify its governance structures. Through a series of national conferences and dialogues, delegates negotiated and eventually ratified a new constitution. In 2001, this constitution was overwhelmingly endorsed by the populace in a referendum, marking a pivotal transition from clan-based power sharing to a multiparty democratic system. While the peaceful referendum garnered praise from some international observers, it failed to secure formal recognition from any foreign governments.

Quest for Recognition

Somaliland asserts its case for independence based on its long-standing de facto statehood, which includes functioning democratic institutions, an independent currency, security forces, and the issuance of passports. The region's government holds regular democratic elections and has developed a robust governance system, despite not receiving formal recognition from the international community. Somaliland argues its case based on historical precedent, including the recognition of other breakaway states like Eritrea and Bangladesh, while also highlighting its historical distinction from Somalia prior to unification in 1960. The de facto state contends that its status aligns with African Union (AU) principles. The AU has acknowledged the "unique" nature of Somaliland's situation but has not yet taken decisive action, largely due to concerns about altering the continent's colonial borders and the risks of setting a precedent for other secessionist movements.

Despite being denied recognition, Somaliland has been able to maintain internal stability, making it a relative "oasis" of peace in a turbulent region. It has established diplomatic contacts with countries like Ethiopia, the UK, Belgium, and South Africa, and has even engaged with the EU and the United Nations. However, the lack of formal recognition, especially from the AU, has hindered Somaliland's ability to engage fully in international trade and development.



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Somaliland-Ethiopia MOU

On January 1, 2024, the Horn of Africa was jolted by a seismic shift as Ethiopia and Somaliland signed a groundbreaking and controversial Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

For years, Ethiopia, though a regional power, had kept a delicate balance in its dealings with both Somalia and Somaliland. Yet, in a bold and unexpected move, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Somaliland's President Muse Bihi Abdi agreed to a deal that secured Ethiopia a 50-year lease on a 20-kilometer stretch of Somaliland's coastline, where it will establish a naval base, enhancing its access to the sea. In exchange, Ethiopia has agreed to support Somaliland's long-sought bid for international recognition as a sovereign state, potentially offering economic stakes in Ethiopian Airlines or EthioTelecom to Somaliland. Ethiopia will also invest in infrastructure, including roads and rail links to connect the base to Berbera port, a strategic trade route for landlocked Ethiopia. While the MoU is seen as a political breakthrough, it remains controversial, particularly given Somalia's claims over Somaliland and the uncertainty surrounding the recognition of Somaliland's independence. The agreement strengthens ties between the two nations, with mutual benefits in trade, security cooperation, and economic development, especially through the development of the Berbera port.

Rising Tensions in the Horn of Africa

The MoU between Ethiopia and Somaliland has triggered widespread backlash, particularly from Somalia, which considers Somaliland part of its territory. Somalia swiftly recalled its ambassador and declared the agreement "null and void," while also blocking Ethiopian flights to Somaliland. The Somali government has framed the deal as an infringement on its sovereignty, accusing Ethiopia of meddling in its internal affairs and fueling suspicions of territorial expansion. Egypt, Djibouti, and other regional players have also expressed concerns, fearing the strategic shift could alter the balance of power in the Horn of Africa. Moreover, the militant group Al-Shabaab has threatened Ethiopia with "bitter consequences," as it seeks a unified Somalia under its control.

The agreement risks not only deepening divisions within the Horn of Africa but also destabilizing Somaliland itself, where internal opposition to independence remains strong.



What may be next for Somaliland?

In conclusion, Somaliland's future remains uncertain, as its push for international recognition needs to be first approved by the African Union - where many member countries are hesitant and opposed to its recognition, as they fear subsequent secessionist movements arising and destabilizing the region. While the recent MoU with Ethiopia could pave the way for broader recognition, it risks exacerbating tensions between Somaliland and Somalia. Domestically, Somaliland faces opposition to its pursuit of independence from certain factions within its population, particularly in areas like Las Anod, where clashes between local militias and the Somaliland government have occurred. On the international stage, the absence of widespread recognition complicates Somaliland's efforts to gain full sovereignty.

As Somaliland continues its quest for recognition, the evolving political, economic, and security changes in the Horn of Africa will be crucial in determining whether international recognition will be reached or greater instability will ensue.

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DE-EXTINCTION: DOOM OR DISCOVERY?

Estelle Sia Yu Qi

In the 1940s, the arms race began between the United States and the Soviet Union. In 1957, the space race started. Today, in the 20th Century, we have the de-extinction race. What was once unimaginable is soon to be reality: woolly mammoths, dodo birds, Tasmanian tigers. In 2003, scientists reversed extinction for the first time, albeit for only 7 minutes; since then, scientific curiosity has plagued academics and the public alike. 11 years later, Colossal Biosciences, a biotechnology startup, announced that they had sequenced a Tasmanian tiger genome that is over 99.9% complete.



What is De-extinction?

De-extinction is the process of resurrecting extinct species using modern-day technology and genetic engineering. Currently, the 3 main methods are cloning, genome editing, and selective breeding. The concept of bringing back extinct species has been explored since the early 1920s, but only caught on more broadly in more recent years.

While the term suggests that these species are brought back to life literally, the process generally produces an animal that resembles the extinct species, not one with the exact genetic identity.

Scientific Advancement

Cloning is one of the common methods proposed for restoring extinct species. The process begins with the extraction of the nucleus from a preserved cell of the extinct species. Then, it is swapped into an egg of the species' nearest living relative; this egg is then implanted into a surrogate animal. While this method is able to restore the species with identical genetic code, it can only be used if a preserved cell is available, limiting the range of species that can be revived.

Another method rising in popularity is genome editing due to the advancements of CRISPR technology. To do this, researchers have to edit the genome of a closely related living species directly, referencing a draft genome of the extinct species. Thus, the egg and sperm will produce offspring: a hybrid of the extinct species and its living relatives. This method allows for more species to be resurrected even without any well-preserved tissue, but will be increasingly difficult depending on how degraded the tissue is.

Lastly, selective breeding, such as back-breeding, is also used in de-extinction attempts by breeding animals for an ancestral quality, recreating the traits of extinct species in their closest living relative. In this case, the genome will differ from the extinct species as it merely achieves the phenotype of the extinct ancestor. The downside to this method is its contingency on this ancestral trait still existing in any capacity in those populations.



Ethical Considerations

Although de-extinction signifies progress in human technology, such incredible scientific advancement begs the question of its ethicality. Does our moral responsibility supersede current needs? Is it ethical to resurrect extinct species in a world that has moved on without them? One of the biggest concerns for de-extinction is ecological integration and the ecosystem. The driving force behind de-extinction is the belief that resurrecting extinct species will help restore our fragmented environments.



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According to the leading company of this movement - Colossal Biosciences - the de-extinction of certain species will restore original ecosystems and combat climate change, such as using mammoths to restore the steppe biome. The counter to this is a misallocation of effort. Rather than devote time and money towards de-extinction, it is more logical to direct resources towards the conservation of present habitats, such as tackling climate disruption, pollution, and erosion of biodiversity. In fact, the amount spent on bringing back 3 species is enough to save roughly 100 endangered ones. Moreover, reintroduction and integration of revived species may not be feasible since suitable habitats for the species, especially niche ones, may be destroyed and unavailable. The process of reintroduction with existing species is already one that is lengthy, expensive and difficult, even more so for revived species considering the sheer scale necessary to have an impact.



Furthermore, de-extinction advocates frequently claim the moral high ground, arguing that it is the right thing to do since human activity resulted in their demise.



However, this raises questions of equality. When should we feel morally inclined to resurrect the species? Are all species equally important? Do we only bring back those that died out from direct human causes? At the same time, it also concerns the notion of 'playing God'. Some argue that de-extinction crosses boundaries and oversteps humanity's role by reviving the dead.

Conclusion

In summary, the concept of de-extinction is a remarkable achievement in the world of science, moving our discoveries forward by leaps and bounds. Regardless, more consideration is needed to determine whether it is worth it - if the de-extinction of species should come at the expense of conservation efforts and biodiversity risks. With the first revived animal on its way, society must engage in meaningful discourse and debates and soon reach a consensus, choosing if the potential good outweighs the possible harm.



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A NATION UNITED IN CRISIS: BANGLADESH'S REMARKABLE RESPONSE TO THE FLOOD DISASTER

Oraina Ali

As torrential rains submerged vast regions of Bangladesh in mid-2024, the nation faced one of its worst flood crises in years. Streets turned into rivers, homes were swallowed by water, and thousands were displaced overnight. Yet, amidst the devastation, a beacon of hope shone brightly. The response to this disaster was nothing short of extraordinary, not just in the scale of relief efforts, but in the collective determination of the Bangladeshi people to rise above the waters.



At the heart of this inspiring response were Bangladesh's youth. In particular, the students of Dhaka University turned the iconic Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) into a buzzing hub of relief efforts. Within just a few days, these young leaders raised an astounding BDT 5.23 crore [500k USD], rallying the nation to stand united in the face of adversity.

It wasn't just the size of the funds raised that left people in awe, it was the sheer speed and creativity with which the youth mobilized to act.

But behind the numbers lie stories of grit, innovation, and heart. Stories that show how, in the face of a disaster of this magnitude, the youth of Bangladesh didn't just rise to the occasion, they soared.

The relief efforts were nothing short of heroic. From dawn till dusk, TSC became a whirlwind of activity. Fifty trucks piled high with food, clothes, and medical supplies were assembled through community donations, with hundreds of volunteers working round the clock. They packed essential goods with precision, knowing every hour mattered for the families waiting in the flood-ravaged regions.

One moment in particular captured the spirit of this extraordinary effort: a sixth-grader named Izaz arrived at TSC hand-in-hand with his father, determined to help. Together, they loaded trucks, their small acts of service rippling across the community. Stories like Izaz's echoed through the relief center, each one a testament to the unshakeable solidarity of the Bangladeshi people.

The innovation didn't stop at the collection center. The youth embraced technology and creativity in unexpected ways. Gaming enthusiasts turned into charity streamers, hosting live gaming sessions where viewers donated in real-time. SEO experts sold backlinks, while others tapped into their tutoring skills, organizing masterclasses on everything from SAT prep to essay writing, each initiative funneling funds toward relief efforts.

One standout example came from the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, which raised an incredible BDT 1.42 crore [129k USD] in just one day.

This was not just a story of giving; it was a story of how resourcefulness and collaboration can make miracles happen in times of crisis.

This flood relief effort was more than just a response to a natural disaster. It was a blueprint for how Bangladesh's youth, equipped with passion and ingenuity, can lead in the face of unimaginable challenges. In their hands, the country not only weathered the storm but set a new benchmark for what's possible when a nation comes together.



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INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

TADEJ POGAČAR: THE GREATEST CYCLIST OF HIS GENERATION

Ben Taylor

In the world of professional cycling, few names inspire awe and admiration quite like Tadej Pogačar. The young Slovenian cyclist has taken the sport by storm, redefining what it means to be a modern champion. From his back-to-back Tour de France victories to his impressive versatility across different terrains, Pogačar has earned his place among the greats. But what makes him stand out in such a competitive field? What separates him from his peers, and why is he considered the best cyclist of this generation?

A Young Prodigy Dominating the Field

At just 25 years old, Pogačar has already amassed an impressive list of accomplishments that many cyclists spend their entire careers chasing. His breakthrough came in 2020 when he became the youngest rider to win the Tour de France in over a century. He followed this up with another victory in 2021, solidifying his reputation as a dominant force in cycling.

But it's not just the sheer number of victories that sets Pogačar apart—it's how he wins.

He has an uncanny ability to read races, make split-second decisions, and execute perfectly timed attacks. His tactical awareness is far beyond his years, and his ability to perform under pressure is unmatched.

Versatility: Master of All Terrains

What makes Pogačar truly exceptional is his versatility. While many cyclists specialize in a particular type of race or terrain, Pogačar excels in all areas.

Whether it's climbing the steepest mountains, dominating time trials, or sprinting to the finish, he's a rider without weaknesses.

In the mountains, he climbs with a fluid, almost effortless style, making it look like he's riding on flat terrain when others are suffering. On the flats, he holds his own in time trials, showcasing his ability to combine power and endurance. This rare blend of skills makes him a threat in any race, whether it's a multi-week Grand Tour or a one-day classic.

Zone 2 Training: The Secret to His Success

One of the key factors that sets Pogačar apart from his competitors is his unique approach to training, specifically his reliance on Zone 2 training. Zone 2 refers to a heart rate zone where the body is working at an aerobic pace, which is slower and more controlled compared to high-intensity training. For many athletes, spending time in this zone builds endurance without overloading the body with fatigue.

While some riders focus on high-intensity interval training to maximize performance, Pogačar's approach emphasizes long, steady efforts at a lower intensity.



This not only enhances his ability to recover quickly between races but also builds a strong aerobic base that allows him to maintain a high level of performance over long stages.

This method of training gives Pogačar an edge, particularly in multi-stage races like the Tour de France. His remarkable endurance allows him to stay consistent throughout grueling three-week races while maintaining enough energy for decisive attacks. His ability to recover faster than his rivals means that even after punishing stages, he's ready to go again while others are still feeling the effects.





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TADEJ POGAČAR: THE GREATEST CYCLIST OF HIS GENERATION

Ben Taylor



Mental Strength: The Psychology of a Champion

It's not just physical ability that makes Pogačar the best—it's his mental strength. Cycling is as much a mental game as it is a physical one, and Pogačar has the mindset of a champion. Whether he's attacking on the final climb of a mountain stage or pacing himself in a time trial, his focus never wavers.

Pogačar's ability to remain calm under pressure is a hallmark of his racing style. Even when faced with challenges, such as tactical moves from rival teams or tough weather conditions, he maintains his composure and rides with confidence. His mental toughness allows him to make intelligent decisions in real-time, a skill that has often left his rivals scrambling to keep up.

Outclassing the Competition

While there are many talented cyclists in the peloton, Pogačar stands head and shoulders above the rest. Riders like Primož Roglič, Jonas Vingegaard, and Wout van Aert have all proven themselves capable of competing at the highest level, but none have demonstrated the same consistency and all-around ability as Pogačar.

His rivals know that to beat him, they need to rely on team tactics and hope for the perfect scenario, whereas Pogačar is often able to win through sheer individual brilliance. Whether it's launching an attack from far out or sprinting for the finish, he can outpace and outthink his opponents time and time again.

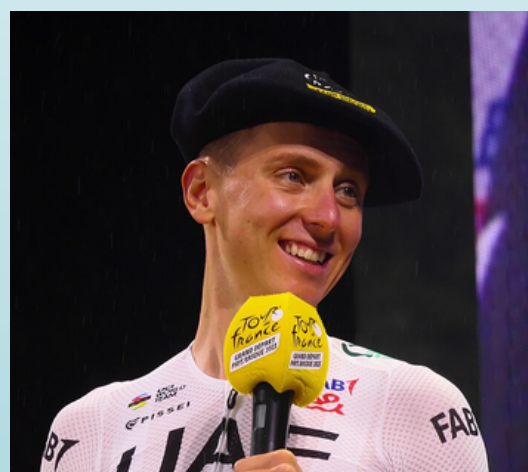
The Future of Cycling

At such a young age, Pogačar's career is only just beginning, and his potential seems limitless. With a deep passion for the sport, a scientific approach to training, and an unparalleled competitive drive, he's not just the greatest cyclist of his generation—he's on his way to becoming one of the greatest of all time.

As cycling evolves, Pogačar's influence on the sport will continue to grow.

His success with Zone 2 training and his versatile racing style may inspire a new generation of cyclists to focus on endurance, recovery, and mental strength.

In a sport known for legends like Eddy Merckx and Lance Armstrong, Tadej Pogačar is carving out his place as the defining cyclist of this era. His achievements, versatility, and unique training approach make him a once-in-a-generation talent, and it's exciting to imagine what he'll accomplish in the years to come.





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NANO DAP: THE FERTILISER OF THE FUTURE?

Aanchal Agrawal

Agriculture in the 21st century must overcome the daunting task of feeding over 8.5 billion people by 2030, as global populations soar and arable land remains finite. Yet, traditional fertilisers aggravate the crisis, with only 35% of nitrogen absorbed by crops while the rest pollutes ecosystems, choking water bodies and contaminating groundwater. Nanotechnology offers a promising alternative to traditional farming methods. Innovations like Nano DAP can enhance nutrient supply, improve productivity, help eliminate waste, and ensure sustainable farming. Could Nano DAP be the solution to securing global food production while minimising environmental impact?

What is Nano DAP?

Nano DAP is a new form of fertiliser designed in India using nanotechnology. Unlike traditional fertilisers, it comes in a liquid form packed with nutrient-rich nanoparticles, ensuring more efficient nutrient delivery, improved absorption and reduced wastage.

Nano DAP offers a significant edge in nutrient delivery, with plants absorbing 80–90% of its nutrients compared to just 30–40% from traditional fertilisers. This efficiency stems from its nanoparticle design, which provides a high surface area-to-volume ratio, ensuring better root absorption. The result is higher yields with reduced application rates, cutting input costs for farmers and mitigating water contamination and soil degradation caused by excess chemical fertiliser use. Additionally, Nano DAP minimises nitrous oxide emissions, a major greenhouse gas, thus reducing agriculture's carbon footprint and promoting environmentally sound practices.

The small size and high surface area-to-volume ratio of Nano DAP significantly enhance nutrient availability when applied as a seed treatment or foliar spray during critical growth stages. This leads to better crop performance, such as increased chlorophyll content, enhanced photosynthesis, greater root biomass, and more productive tillers and branches.

Field tests by ICAR and state agricultural universities at over 3,000 locations in India reported yield improvements of 2.4% to 27% with Nano DAP at recommended doses. These experiments, conducted on crops like rice, wheat, maize, chickpea, groundnut, and cotton across multiple states, demonstrated its potential to be a sustainable substitute for conventional fertilisers. Farmers participating in the trials reported positive outcomes, reinforcing its promise for modern agriculture.

One major concern is that Nano DAP does not entirely substitute traditional granular fertilisers. A study from Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) casts doubt on the efficacy of Nano DAP, particularly in wheat cultivation.



The study found the yield of wheat grain decreased by 16.1% when Nano DAP was applied alone without the recommended dose of traditional DAP. While Nano DAP reduces the use of conventional fertilisers by 50–75%, it often falls short in matching the yield potential of its granular counterpart, emphasising its current limitations as a stand-alone solution.

While Nano DAP shows promise in tackling agriculture's key challenges, such as enhancing nutrient efficiency, boosting yields and reducing environmental impacts, it cannot fully replace granular fertilisers yet. As with any breakthrough technology, its adoption will require substantial trial and error.

To realise its full potential, ongoing research and development must focus on optimising its formulation and application. Collaborative efforts among governments, research institutions and private stakeholders will be crucial in fostering a more resilient and sustainable agricultural sector equipped to face climate change and resource scarcity.

So, can Nano DAP truly eliminate traditional fertilisers in a world increasingly threatened by climate change? While it's too early to say for sure, it raises an important question: How can we innovate in agriculture to meet the growing food demand sustainably?

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RESOLVED: THE UNITED NATIONS SHOULD ABOLISH PERMANENT MEMBERSHIP ON ITS SECURITY COUNCIL

Phuong Quach



Definition of key terms:

- United Nations: international organization founded in 1945 after World War II to promote peace, security, and cooperation among nations
- Abolish: to formally put an end to something
- Permanent Membership: status held by 5 countries, also known as P5 (US, UK, France, Russia, China) granting them veto power over resolutions
- Security Council: (UNSC) organ of the UN aimed at maintaining peace and security

Background Information

- The United Nations was founded in 1945, after the end of World War II. In the beginning, the United Nations Security Council had 5 permanent members and 6 non-permanent members. In 1963, this was increased to 10 rotating non-permanent members, with a requirement for regional diversity.
- With Russia's war in Ukraine, the permanent membership in the Security Council has become an even more controversial topic of discussion. Russia's status means that it can virtually protect itself from all UN action despite its aggression. The same can also be said about the US, which has vetoed resolutions criticizing Israel, especially recently, when it has been the only country in opposition to UN resolutions.



Potential Arguments for the Affirmative Side:

1. Abuse of Veto Power

Argument: Permanent members have, in many instances, used their veto power to prevent the United Nations from taking action. Russia has used its veto the most, at 143 times, followed by the United States, at 86 times, far ahead of the UK, China, and France. This abuse of veto has led to the United Nations' inaction when chemical weapons were deployed in Syria or when Ukrainians and Palestinians needed protection against violence.

Impact: Abolishing permanent membership allows the Security Council to be able to more effectively address different crises whenever they arise and prevent gridlocks that lead to the unnecessary deaths of civilians.

2. Diversity

Argument: Permanent membership is not representative of the world we're living in. The global hegemony back in 1945, which is almost 80 years ago, does not reflect the hegemonic makeup of the world today. This is especially true in the case of Britain and France, whose geopolitical and economic influences are nowhere near what they once were. They're not even the most powerful countries in Europe. Additionally, most issues discussed within the Security Council are related to Africa. African states also make up the largest number of UN member states, yet not a single African country has permanent membership status.

Impact: The abolition of permanent membership makes the Security Council more inclusive and representative of the world today. This is also important because it paves the way for a wider range of perspectives when making decisions that affect the world as a whole as it allows different countries to play a more active role in addressing issues and finding solutions.

Potential Arguments for the Negative Side:

1. Status Quo Solvency

Argument and Impact: The biggest issue that people have with permanent membership is the use of vetos. However, the abuse of veto power will become much less of a problem for different reasons. As an example, in 2022, a resolution proposed by Liechtenstein was adopted to hold permanent members accountable for their use of veto power. This resolution states that members need to justify their veto through a debate held by the General Assembly. This change will give a voice to countries that aren't part of the Security Council which will subsequently lead to P5 members vetoing less frequently. Other proposals gaining ground include giving the General Assembly the ability to override a veto.

2. Other Options

Argument and Impact: Permanent membership doesn't need to be entirely abolished to solve the UNSC's problems. Since many claim that veto is the biggest problem, countries have simply advocated for the abolition of veto power and nothing more. Others have also supported the expansion of permanent membership to countries in Africa and Latin America, making the UNSC more inclusive.



INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

BALANCING INVESTMENT AND WORKER WELFARE IN BANGLADESH'S RMG SECTOR AND LESSONS FROM GLOBAL MODELS

Riz Khan



Bangladesh is a country synonymous with the global ready-made garments (RMG) industry, second only to China. An analysis of this industry in the context of Bangladesh is crucial to understand how such a small country got to where it is and how it can join other Southeast Asian countries as part of the 'New Tiger Cubs' (a group of fast growing Southeast Asian economies, the term comes from the East Asian 'Tiger Economies'). RMG, often touted as the lifeblood of the country's economy, generates over \$45 billion annually in exports and directly employs more than four million people—predominantly women. Yet, behind these figures is a delicate balance between the retained attractiveness of Bangladesh as an investment destination and the well-being of its workers. This article examines this trade-off, using various lessons from international competitors such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka and reviewing both the possibilities and constraints that Bangladesh faces in emulating their policies.

Bangladesh's Current Position in the RMG Landscape

Appeal for Investments:

Cost structure is where Bangladesh may get its competitive advantage from. Offering some of the lowest wages globally within the apparel industry, with a high production capacity and favorable trade arrangements like the European Union's Generalised Scheme of Preferences, Bangladesh is the ideal production base for mass-market clothing.

In fact, Bangladesh is responsible for about 7% of global apparel exports.

However, infrastructure bottlenecks, rising labour unrest, and looming uncertainties tied to the country's impending graduation from Least Developed Countries (LDC) status in 2026 increasingly beset it. This transition threatens Bangladesh's tariff-free market access to the EU and other key markets.

Worker Welfare Concerns:

Wage increases have been implemented since the Rana Plaza reforms, but the

average earnings per month remain low at about \$105, much lower than in other major RMG-exporting countries, including Vietnam at \$300 and Cambodia at \$200. Reports of poor working conditions, curtailing union activities, and gender disparities in the workplace add more stains to the sector's reputation.

Learning from the Competition Vietnam:

Efficiency and automation are the hallmarks of the RMG strategy in Vietnam. The country has managed to offset its relatively higher labour costs by gaining productivity through heavy investment in technology and training. Its export market is further bolstered by several bilateral trade agreements, such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, popularly known as CPTPP.

Cambodia:

The garment industry in Cambodia focuses on the protection of labor rights and therefore has a policy that is concurrent with global labor standards.

However, its small scale and dependency on foreign finance keeps it behind Bangladesh in the competitive race.



Sri Lanka:

Sri Lanka has branded itself as an ethical and sustainable production hub, supplying high-value apparel. The country hosts the world's first carbon-neutral apparel factory and has vigorous measures on compliance with regard to worker welfare. It makes a conscious appeal to buyers who want to pay a premium for a sustainable product.



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| <p>Opportunities and Limitations for Bangladesh Green Transition:</p> <p>Bangladesh already boasts over 200 green-certified factories, the most in the world. Scaling this can gain a wedge of positive reputation with environmentally conscious buyers, including those from Europe.</p> <p>Diversification:</p> <p>The ability to move into higher-value segments, such as functional apparel and sportswear, can reduce dependence on low-cost production and bring higher wage opportunities.</p> | <p>Technology Integration:</p> <p>Mechanization and digital tools could enhance productivity. Less than 15% of factories in Bangladesh currently use advanced automation, but increasing this percentage will be important to long-term competitiveness.</p> <p>Cost Pressure:</p> <p>Increasing wages or compliance might discourage the cost-sensitive buyer segment, which would then look for other low-cost countries such as Ethiopia or Myanmar.</p> | <p>Policy and Governance Gaps:</p> <p>While reforms since Rana Plaza have been extensive, weak enforcement of labour laws and limited government oversight erode gains in this area.</p> <p>Global Market Shifts:</p> <p>Losing LDC benefits means that Bangladesh must renegotiate trade agreements or pay more in tariffs, which will hurt its export competitiveness.</p> |
| <p>Policy Recommendations</p> <p>Training:</p> <p>Most of the garment workers have little education and training. To improve productivity and attract higher-value-added segments of the RMG industry, Bangladesh should establish industry-academia partnerships to develop tailored training programs, provide incentives for businesses to invest in automation/digital technologies, and create a conducive environment for research and development in textile and apparel technologies.</p> <p>Enforcement of labour laws:</p> <p>Bangladesh should enforce labour laws more rigorously to improve worker welfare, enhance the industry's reputation, establish effective grievance mechanisms, and expand social safety net programs, including health insurance and retirement benefits. Enforcement is critical as the country has historically fallen short when ensuring the rule of law. This means that the larger firms tend to follow the regulations (and are more able to follow the regulations) due to pressure from their large buyers, while the smaller firms that employ a majority of the garment workers tend to fly under the radar.</p> <p>Diversification:</p> <p>To reduce dependence on a few key markets and low-value products, Bangladesh should explore new markets, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, and</p> | <p>simultaneously promote the production of high-value products, such as technology and sportswear, while supporting the development of both local brands and designer labels.</p> <p>In addition, Bangladesh can motivate the industry to adopt eco-friendly production methods in all processes, such as water recycling and energy efficiency. It can also encourage support certification and labeling schemes promoting sustainable and ethical production, and invest in research and development to develop innovative, sustainable materials and processes.</p> <p>Bangladesh now finds itself at a crossroads where it needs to balance two competing priorities: it can either continue to be appealing for global apparel buyers due to labour cost competitiveness or improve the of quality of life of its garments workforce and forgo this cost advantage in favor of having a high skill garments sector in the future. The experiences in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka show that these goals are not mutually exclusive. Bold policy measures and strategic investments can help Bangladesh reconfigure the RMG sector into a truly inclusive and sustainable model--one that is a leader not only in apparel export but also in global development.</p> <p>Bibliography:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bangladesh• https://www.thedailystar.net/roundtables/news/social-protection-rmg-workers-bangladesh-3745686• https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/rmg/rmg-exports-bangladesh-earned-395-billion-july-says-bgmea-682014• https://rmgbd.net/2024/08/bangladesh-retains-2nd-largest-rmg-exporter-ranking/• https://www.thedailystar.net/anniversary-supplement-2024/innovation-key-the-future/news/intra-rmg-diversification-the-next-frontier-3548301• https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/workers-wages-vietnams-textile-garment-industry-5gaec/• http://www.humanrights.asia/resources/journals-magazines/article2/special-report-inexistent-rule-of-law-in-bangladesh/02/ | |



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DIAMONDS COLLAPSE UNDER PRESSURE: CHINESE EDUCATIONAL ISSUE

Ken-Nhat Hoang

The Chinese educational system (ranked 35th in the world), produces an unbelievable number of prodigies, outperforming other countries on international tests and achieving universal coverage in a nine-year compulsory education, but still struggles with multifarious problems.

Cramming information until you're forgetting how to solve the 1623th equation, Chinese education is known for its prodigious standards and intensive pressure. Students often wake up at 5:30 and go to bed after 23:00. Some student groups would take turns waking up each other and doing homework late at night. School strictly compels students to pay full attention, because every time they don't do so, every yawn or distracted behavior they exhibit, is taken into consideration for quantitative scoring. Even interactions with a pupil of the opposite gender can affect your score. Being sick or busy is no reason for not completing your assignments. Deeply rooted in the tradition of searching for talents based on testing, longstanding studious culture like the tale of Sun Jing and Su Qin is why China has adopted such academic rigor. In China's social system, the improvement of education level is one of the most effective means to achieve upward social mobility.

Students are overwhelmed with complicated curriculums, significant homework, and exam preparations which they often stay up late to finish.



Students spend an average of 3 hours daily to complete their homework, teens on average spend a total 10,080 hours completing homework before reaching adulthood. Students' fates are decided by two major exams: the Zhongkao and Gaokao.

Consequently, parents often equip their children with supplemental classes on multitudinous subjects such as math, science, literature,... while nurturing other talents such as sports, piano,... Tencent's 2019 survey showed 88.7% of students in fourth through first tier cities took extra classes, averaging 2.1 supplemental classes per student. Therefore, free time is scarce, and children receive "gifts" such as exercise books on special occasions. School continues everyday and the concept of national holidays becomes nonexistent for Chinese students.



Chinese students smile at their accomplishments and cry at their depression after completing their homework. Academics by far and away depresses students, proving detrimental to their mental health. 45% of participants reported in a survey that they felt their homework was impossible to be finished. Up to 87.6% of high school students stated they often finish homework at midnight. Nearly half of interviewed students were frustrated and have a low self-esteem affected by homework; 20% reported "feeling suffocated and wanting to tear their books". The leading cause of youth suicide in China derives from academic pressure. November 5th, 2023 saw a college student pass away after a grueling series of livestreams, which was part of his internship requirements. 5 days later, another student died suddenly in class due to stress and sleep deprivation. Studies showed that 19.3% of Chinese adolescents have experienced suicidal ideation. Therese Hesketh and her colleagues conducted a study with 2,191 Chinese pupils aged 9-12 years from urban and rural areas, uncannily discovering that over one-third of the children reported having psychosomatic symptoms at least once a week.



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In other research, 76.2% of students described bad moods due to academic pressure, high parental expectations, and 9.1% reported "feelings of despair". Additionally, several studies illustrated how parents who adopted strict parenting styles, ordinary in China, contribute to teens' family stress. Occupied by studying, students lack time to cope with interpersonal issues, and experience limited social lives, their communication skills gradually blunting.

Heated debate only goes with questionable policies. Almost as if from an Orwellian dystopia, a nascent headband is being attached to every student's head to monitor their attention by analyzing the electric signals of neurons in their brains, in tandem sending real-time data to teachers and parents. The headband also includes a light signal with different colors corresponding to different levels of concentration. A professor criticizes the device for being inaccurate and uncomfortable, stating that fidgeting or even adjusting it incorrectly steers results.

Other classes install cameras to identify student yawning, checking phones, analyzing their mood and attention.

Students wear uniforms embedded with chips tracking their location to detect suspicious actions from not participating in activities to leaving campus. A robot is used to analyze the health data of first graders. Some classrooms established obstructing metal bars to correct students' posture.

China's education approach is highly critical, extinguishing creativity and promoting propaganda. Elementary schoolers are expected to memorize 2,500 Chinese characters. The emphasis on memorization over creative thinking or flexibility forms no "root" understanding. Students aren't encouraged to ask a lot of questions and lessons have few interactions. Aimed at strengthening the party's grip, Xi built "Red Army Schools" where students wear soldiers' uniforms and delve into Chinese history and culture, even in subjects such as math.

The curriculum included more patriotism and historical glorification, spreading anti-Japanese sentiments and censoring any Western values, facing enormous backlash as parents complained that other practical things should be taught. The plan proved counter-productive and trust for the government fell among those who received higher levels of education. Lastly, rural areas have less access to education, struggling to break poverty cycles or compete with their urban counterparts. Many families bear significant burden enrolling children in supplemental classes.

China has made some significant changes to reform its education system. Unfortunately, one of its policies named "Double-reduction" failed as it not only hit public tutoring hard but also missed its main objective. Private, underground tutoring grew, which is less affordable for lower-income families, forcing the policy to be abolished.

Today, Shenzhen schools are modern with state-of-the-art infrastructures. Classrooms have been digitized equipping students with life-necessary, technological skills like coding, arts... and implementing innovative teaching techniques. China has also clasped its recent goals of spending 4% of its GDP on education and is expanding digital education to rural communities. The Chinese educational ministry has aimed to revolutionize its educational system and nourish high-caliber prodigies, shifting towards practical life skills, project-based learning and reducing the weight of standardized tests.

At the end of the day, while Chinese education produces great results, it often is achieved from stress and pressure. Despite facing several challenges and dealing with many issues, China has taken shrewd actions towards improving its education system and addressing issues, with some notable, promising changes already present.

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INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

WHY THE GENDER GAP IN HEALTH IS COSTING LIVES

Sarika Saiyara

Did you know that doctors treat male and female patients differently? As a woman, I am 10% less likely to have my pain assessed when I enter a hospital and also less likely to be given any pain medication.

This discrepancy stems from the longstanding and unquestioned stereotype that women are “hysterical” and have a higher pain tolerance than men. The result? On average, women are diagnosed with diabetes four and a half years later than men, and cancer diagnoses for women occur when they are, on average, two and a half years older.

But it’s not just doctors.

In her 2019 book, “Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men”, British journalist Caroline Criado Perez makes a harrowing discovery: over the course of 15 years, men outnumbered women 3:1 in 31 medical trials for congestive heart failure. This bias begins long before treatment reaches patients. Even at the development stage, preclinical testing often focuses disproportionately on male animals and male cells. When the medicines move to human trials, women are consistently under-represented.



The consequences of this oversight are devastating.

According to the World Economic Forum, the women’s health gap equates to 75 million years of life lost every year due to poor health or early death.

Don’t women live longer?

Yes, and in poor health.

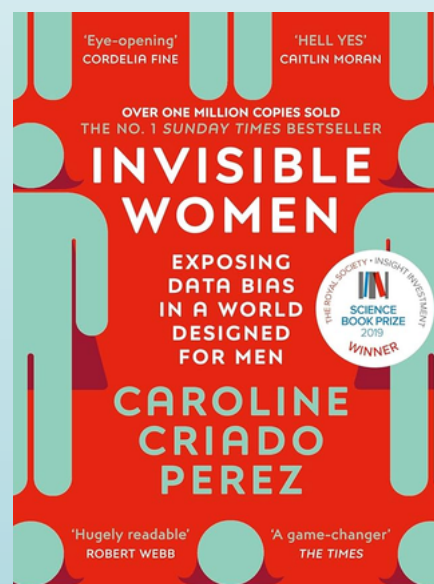
The majority of women older than 65 live in developing countries, where poverty, social exclusion, and discriminatory attitudes exacerbate women’s health challenges. In these countries, women suffer from chronic poor health due to a combination of factors, including the preferential feeding and education of boys, leading to malnutrition in young women. Additionally, the numerous pregnancies many women undergo further compromise their nutritional health. To make matters worse, older women in these regions are often overlooked, maybe because, in the grand scheme of things, they have been considered unimportant and unproductive.

Why is there so little research on the female body?

Because the white male body is the default for scientific research.

Historically, researchers have believed that findings from male bodies could be applied to women, but that’s far from the truth. The male body is generally larger, has a different fat content, and processes drugs differently.

This bias doesn’t just affect adults. Research has shown that female infants and children have less access to food and medical care, as researchers often treat households as single entities with uniform internal distribution. This leads to under-representation of female children in health research and further perpetuates disparities in care.



Another factor is the way women’s bodies are often reduced to their reproductive capabilities. Beyond fertility and childbearing, there is a startling lack of research into other aspects of female health. For instance, because of being labeled a “baby-making machine,” a woman’s health outside of pregnancy is frequently neglected, particularly for adolescents and postmenopausal women.



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Lack of Progress in Fertility and Childbearing

Women are often prescribed drugs that are not only less effective but sometimes even less safe than for men. A notorious example is the thalidomide scandal, in which an anti-morning sickness drug caused devastating birth defects in babies more than 60 years ago.

Even today, drug safety for women, specifically pregnant women, remains a concern. Since the 1990s, the FDA has allowed clinical trials to begin before all animal studies have been completed, including those meant to measure reproductive toxicity. The result? Researchers may have no idea how an investigational drug could affect a developing fetus.

Endometriosis: A Silent Killer Ignored

Endometriosis, rightfully labeled as a "silent killer," affects 1 in every 10 women.

Yet it can take up to 11 years to diagnose, partly because medical science lacks non-invasive diagnostic tools like ultrasound or blood tests that can reliably detect the condition. For millions of women, this delay in diagnosis means years of debilitating pain and suffering that go untreated.

Menstrual Cycles: A Mystery Even to Women

Shockingly, many women themselves are unaware of the phases of their menstrual cycle beyond the actual menstruation—phases like the follicular, ovulatory, and luteal stages that can affect everything from energy levels to fertility. Despite the significant impact of these phases on a woman's health, little research has been done on how specific nutrients, minerals, and lifestyle choices can optimize each stage of the cycle.

In recent years, the rise of the TikTok trend called "cycle-syncing" has given women a glimpse into how their menstrual cycles affect their daily lives. While some of the advice circulating online is unscientific, it does show that women are eager to understand their bodies better.

Towards Bridging the Gender Health Gap

TikTok trends alone cannot empower women with the knowledge they deserve about their bodies. What we need is a global commitment to awareness, research, and innovation that puts women's health at the forefront.

Only by prioritizing these efforts can we equip women with the tools to demand equitable healthcare—care that is informed, inclusive, and truly reflective of their unique needs.

It's time to bridge the gender health gap, not just in words but through meaningful, lasting change.



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INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

WHO WILL BE THE NEXT TORY LEADER?

Ed Green

Following Rishi Sunak's resignation after his party's historic defeat in the UK general election on 4th July 2024, a tightly contested battle to become leader of the Conservative Party, and the UK's next Leader of the Opposition, has ensued. The choices that Conservative MPs and party members will make in the upcoming months will set the direction of the party for the next few years; will they go further right to win back voters from Reform UK, or will they shift closer to the centre to target those who voted for the Liberal Democrats and Labour? It will also be a defining moment for whether the Conservatives will quickly return to government, or struggle in the opposition benches for the foreseeable future.

How does the leadership contest work?

Between the 4th-11th September, Conservative MPs voted for who they supported to be leader, to reduce the field down from 6 to 4 candidates. The 2 candidates with the lowest number of votes were eliminated. Then, from the 29th September-2nd October, the remaining candidates will speak at the Conservative Party Conference, to make their case to party members. Subsequently, from 9th-10th October, Tory MPs vote again to determine the final 2 candidates. Following this, party members (members of the public who are a part of the Conservative Party) have until the 31st October to vote for who they want to be leader, with the result being announced on the 2nd November.



Following former home secretary Dame Priti Patel's first round elimination on 4th September, and shadow work and pensions secretary Mel Stride's defeat in the second round on the 10th September, 4 candidates remain in the running to become leader:



Kemi Badenoch

After holding a number of ministerial posts under Boris Johnson, Liz Truss, and Rishi Sunak, Kemi Badenoch has launched a bid to become Tory leader. Known best for her critical views on transgender rights, she has become a rising star in the Conservative Party and regularly tops polls of Tory members held on the Conservative Home website. Under her leadership, the party would likely shift further right, especially in regards to social policies. She finished 4th in the leadership contest following Johnson's resignation in 2022, and would be the first black leader of the Conservative Party if elected. In the latest round of voting, she finished second with 28 votes.

Robert Jenrick

Former immigration minister Robert Jenrick is best known for his tough stance on immigration. After resigning from his post due to believing that Sunak's plan to deport illegal immigrants to Rwanda "does not go far enough", he seems set to take the party much further right in all policy areas should he become Tory leader. He has been involved in multiple controversies since 2020, and has led calls for the UK to withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights. Jenrick finished first in the latest round of voting, with him holding 33 votes of support from his fellow Conservative MPs.



INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

WHO WILL BE THE NEXT TORY LEADER?

Ed Green

Tom Tugendhat

Having previously held a high-ranking position in the British Army, and now serving as shadow security minister, Tom Tugendhat has always been perceived as a centrist.

After voting 'Remain' in the 2016 Brexit referendum and supporting the legalisation of same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland in 2019, Tugendhat has historically been seen as progressive and less right-wing.

However, he has sought to garner support from the right of the party since launching his leadership bid, with him pledging to cap the UK's net migration at 100,000 people a year and refusing to rule out leaving the European Convention on Human Rights. It is therefore likely that the party would move towards the centre in regards to social policy, but shift further right in immigration policy should he win. Tugendhat finished joint third in the second round of voting, with 21 votes.

James Cleverley

James Cleverley is the most experienced candidate on the ballot, having previously served as home secretary and foreign secretary.

He would be expected to, largely, bring the Conservative Party closer to the centre, having always been seen as being on the more 'moderate' wing of the party. His strong support of gay marriage and opposition to culture wars targeting trans people strongly indicates that he would bring Tory social policy much closer to the centre, but his commitment to bring back Sunak's Rwanda immigration policy if elected leader demonstrates how he would retain the party's right-wing stance on immigration. He finished with 21 votes in the previous round of voting, joint third with Tugendhat.



With the four candidates having now set out where they stand and what they believe, an exciting and era-defining contest is set to take place, and it is really anyone's guess who will be the new Leader of the Opposition in November.

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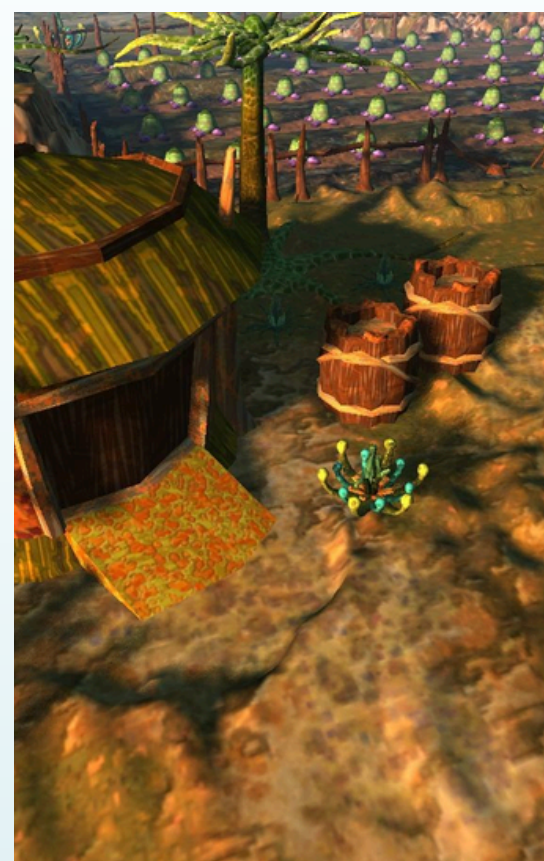
BEYOND ENTERTAINMENT: VIDEO GAMES AS A MEDIUM FOR EMPATHY

Aarna Kapadia

Imagine making life-or-death decisions in a war-torn country or being an immigration officer in an imaginary land. While most never live such experiences, video games enable players to embody these roles and explore them in meaningful ways. Initially, video games served as a stimulating form of entertainment, with apparent benefits such as improved cognitive abilities and problem-solving skills. Today, they have become more sophisticated, often including elaborate narratives that deeply immerse the player. Through this prevalence of narratives in video games, a new benefit has arisen: improved empathy and global awareness. This can be seen in the rise of games with serious undertones utilizing the medium to convey important themes; however, with this, challenges also occur.

How Do Video Games Foster Empathy and Global Awareness?

The secret to this new power of video games lies in the medium's ability to tell stories. Whether it is video games, books, or movies, storytelling has always been a method that engages audiences in a narrative, allowing them to assume a new perspective and build emotional bonds with characters. Nevertheless, one key difference among storytelling mediums is interactivity. In video games, players are cast in lead roles of stories and make choices that have real consequences. This enables audience-immersion on a new level. When used morally, great benefits can be reaped. A study done by The University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2018 demonstrated this by having one hundred and fifty middle school students play a game titled 'Crystals of Kaydor'. In the game, players are transported to another planet, where the only way to communicate with human-like aliens living there is by deciphering their facial expressions.



It is a deeply personal game about a family's experience raising a son with a terminal illness. The game has moved players to tears, raising awareness about grief and resilience. Another example is 'Papers, Please' which, while taking place in an imaginary country, expresses stories that are very real. It puts the player in the role of a passport inspector, who not only hears the stories of refugees and other individuals aiming to pass through border control, but also their devastating responses when they cannot. Both games have utilised compelling storytelling and immersive gaming to express distinct and important values to their players. Generally, these games have garnered unanimous feedback among critics and players alike, expressing that it has broadened their perspectives and made them more aware of current global issues.

After as little as two weeks, the study found that the students' neural pathways related to empathy became stronger.

Hence, a well-thought-out video game can be used as a medium to spread valuable messages in a way that is entertaining, poignant, and collaborative.

How Has This Worked in Practice?

Numerous games have used the potential benefits of empathy successfully, impacting thousands. One such game includes 'That Dragon, Cancer'.

What Are the Challenges of Developing Such Video Games?

Unfortunately, developing a game that can foster an impactful response poses numerous challenges. These include the risk of oversimplification, accessibility barriers, and balancing education and entertainment.



INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

BEYOND ENTERTAINMENT: VIDEO GAMES AS A MEDIUM FOR EMPATHY

Aarna Kapadia

Firstly, while games can increase awareness of prevalent issues in our world, one problem is the simplicity of video games. Individuals may miss deeper messages, assuming real-world challenges can be reduced to simple choices. While some video games pose these choices as simpler than others, this is a risk undertaken by all video games.

Secondly, not everyone plays video games or even owns the resources to do so. Thus, the outreach of the message, and its impact, is reduced. One case of this is the video game 'Eco', a multiplayer survival game that focuses on environmental sustainability. While praised for its balance of innovation and education, many were deterred from playing due to its hefty PC setup and internet connection requirements.



Finally, there is the issue of a game not being entertaining enough for its audience. When video games sacrifice amusement for awareness, people often become less inclined to play, therefore lowering their impact once again. The video game 'Fate of the World', featuring scenarios where the player is put in charge of a fictional international organization has suffered such a fate. The magazine and website 'PC Gamer' claimed that "It's a worthy and handsome effort, but frustratingly badly explained, making it hard to play".

In general, developers must be extremely mindful of striking a balance between education and awareness, and also ensure that the actual storylines within the games are of good quality.

While these factors make it challenging, the potential benefits and success stories prove the value of video games as more than just entertainment. With effort and care, the ability to create meaningful video games is feasible and valuable.



Conclusion

On the whole, video games are emerging as a platform for conveying messages, not just entertainment. By fostering empathy and encouraging globalisation, video games are capable of educating individuals and driving change for serious topics. In a world filled with endless digitalisation and short attention spans, it is imperative to find new ways to teach the new generations. In this world, video games can be a solution, rather than a problem.

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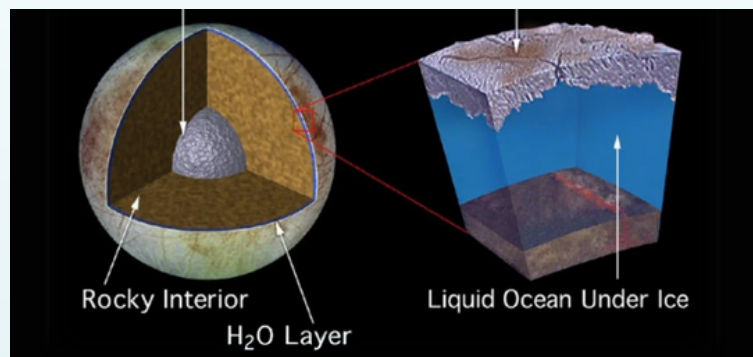


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COULD THERE BE LIFE ON ONE OF JUPITER'S MOONS-EUROPA?

Adwaith R. Nair

Besides the planet Earth we as humans live on, the most researched and studied second base of life has been Mars. It has the pro of being relatively easy to access for exploration compared to most planets because of its favourable proximity to Earth. Another benefit is the proven existence of liquid water that existed decades ago on Mars' surface. These discoveries have led many astrobiologists and specialists to suggest that life could be viable on Mars, because where there is water there is a possibility of life as well.



But what about life a little further? We've talked about what's on Mars, but what about one of Jupiter's moons-Europa? This moon is the fourth largest out of the 95 moons that orbit around Jupiter, the sixth closest in vicinity to Jupiter, and was discovered in 1610 by Galileo. The frozen moon is about 380 million km away from planet earth and holds temperatures as cold as -170°C (-260°F) causing it to have an icy shell. Other than the icy shell on the surface of the moon it is also primarily composed of silicate rock and possibly has an iron-nickel core.

In the recent decade of research, there has been more emphasis towards the exploration of this moon, and this is due to the speculation of a possibility that Europa is capable of carrying life. Strong evidence has been shown by NASA that beneath Europa's frozen exterior of ice lies an ocean of liquid water, which is also one of the essential ingredients for all living organisms. Many scientists also agree that this vast subterranean sea could host multiple microorganisms similar to the proportions of bacteria found on earth. While some argue that the thick ice layer blocking sunlight would hinder processes like photosynthesis, others suggest alternative energy sources could support life on Europa.

According to Chyba, a likelier source of energy may come from fast-moving, charged particles

that pound Europa from the atmosphere of Jupiter; the planet itself has the strongest magnetic field (about 10 times that of Earth's) which affects Europa due to its orbital path. The magnetic field causes ions to slam into the icy surface at high velocities, potentially triggering chemical reactions. For example, frozen water molecules and carbon dioxide can transform into an organic compound such as formaldehyde, which can act as an energy source for a common bacteria on Earth known as *Hyphomicrobium*.

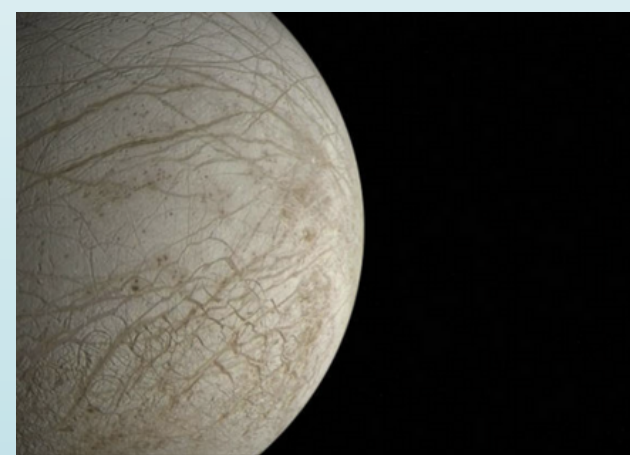
One of the biggest challenges however, isn't the distance or the magnetic field radiation, but the ice sheet that hides the surface of the liquid ocean on this moon. The ice layer is estimated to be about 80 to 170 km thick (50 to 100 miles), if it is said that microorganisms can survive on this terrain, there has to be a way for these compounds to get through the dense layer of ice into the ocean. Thankfully a hopeful solution to this is the tidal heating faced on the moon. As Europa orbits Jupiter, the immense gravitational pull causes the moon to flex.

This constant flexing generates heat through friction within the ice and the underlying rock, which may cause ice to thin out in certain areas. Heat from Europa's rocky mantle, combined with tidal stresses, may drive hydrothermal activity at the seafloor; this heat could transfer upward, thinning the ice or melting it in specific regions. There has been evidence of all of this occurring, where the presence of chaotic terrain (regions of broken and tilted ice blocks) suggested melting or partial liquefaction beneath the surface.

Moreover, while the rate at which the natural heating occurs on the surface may be slow paced, and could take several decades for any major effect, with further research and experiments on the composition of the surface, more breakthroughs could come about, especially when missions like the Europa

Clipper by NASA are underway. This mission in particular was launched in October of 2024 and is expected to arrive in 2030. The mission's main purpose will be to determine if life is possible on Europa, through a series of experiments namely to determine the thickness of Europa's icy shell, the moon's composition, and to characterize Europa's geology and determine if there are places below the surface that could support life.

But let us consider what this could mean for humanity. Not only would we have multiple breakthroughs in our understanding of biology and chemical processes or elements that occur on the moon, but it could ultimately show that there could be multiple other astronomical objects capable of hosting life. The possibility of life on Europa challenges us to rethink the uniqueness of Earth as a cradle for life and expands our understanding of habitability in space. Discovering even the simplest organisms beneath its icy crust would affirm that life can be possible in diverse and extreme environments, which would inspire hope that the universe teems with living worlds.



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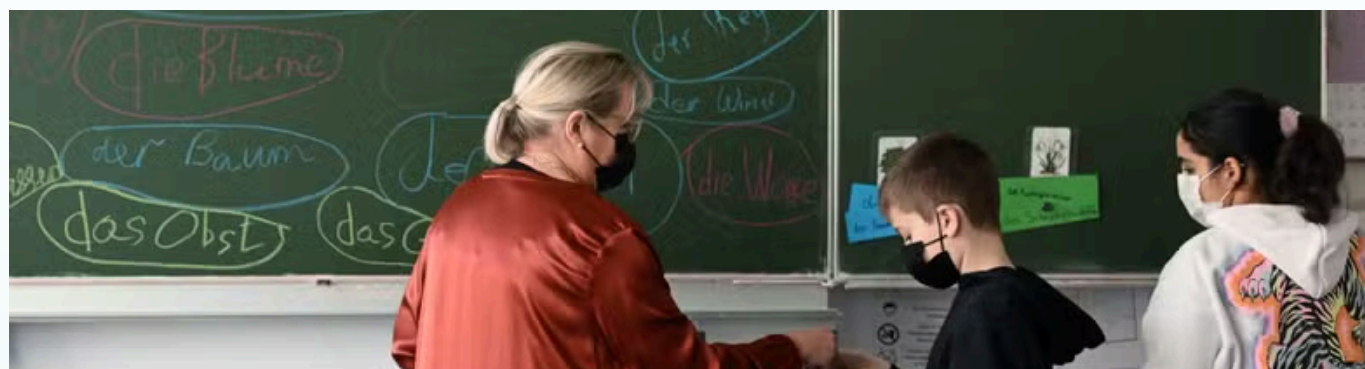
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INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

GERMANY'S EDUCATION SYSTEM IS FALLING APART: WHY?

Manuela Buesa



German education is world-renowned for its quality and rigor, and it is most popular for having introduced to the world a focus on early childhood and a dual system. After four years of primary school, German kids are divided into two tracks: academic studies or technical careers.

However, the same essence that serves as a base for the prestige of Germany's system is leading to its demise.

The alarm regarding Germany's education quality isn't restricted to recent years. In the 2000s, the results of comparative tests in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) showed that German students were much less qualified than those in Austria, Poland, Switzerland, and many other European countries. The shock prompted reforms, but the PISA test performance in 2023 showed that scores in math, science, and reading continued flunking. This is largely due to the system's track division and rigidity.

Different tracks serve as a dividing factor, with academic secondary schooling majorly resulting in higher-paying jobs in the future. Further, the inflexible system demands that German teachers be able to teach more than one subject, meaning international professionals are often not allowed to teach in the country. This situation yielded an increase in inequality perpetuated by education and, combined with the rise in birth rates and immigration, a massive teacher shortage.

In Germany, education is a state-level decision. So, states are the ones to target or cut investment. Ideally, this would mean that states could learn from each other when specific policies worked, but this is far from reality. In fact, successful tactics are often limited to only one state. For example, in Hamburg, language tests and lessons in German were introduced to preschoolers, guaranteeing that the choice between tracks was less driven by social background. It meant increased human capital exploration, skyrocketing Hamburg's city-state schools to among the best nationwide. Nevertheless, in most of the country, children from underprivileged backgrounds, especially those who speak another language at home, reach the track divide at a considerable disadvantage. It sets them up for failure as early as ten years old, destined to lower-paying jobs that perpetuate poverty cycles.

At the same time, the people at the high level of society, who hold the power to drive change, got where they are by integrating into the academic track. When looking back, it's harder for those people to see the problems with the system they benefited from, contributing to the lack of active reaction towards the flawed structure of the education system. Moreover, any change in education only has significant long-term

results. With education being a heated topic as German citizens defend it as a way to develop culture, politicians crawl away from making effective changes in their short mandates.

Worse, the highly structured education system is outdated, lacking the adaptability necessary to the rapidly changing world. German schools now face enormous teacher shortages, with states competing to lure new teachers to their schools. Instead of contributing together to train the number of necessary teachers to fill essential positions, a weird free market prevails where wealthier states get the best teachers (since they can offer higher wages and securitization).

United with the lack of effective policies, the seriousness of the shortage continues to increase along with regional inequality.

Finally, it's unmistakable that the developed world also faces problems related to essential activities such as education. The question in Germany is: how soon will effective and integrated solutions come to the main stage? For the well-being of the German society, we should hope that it's in the near future.

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INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

SWEET POISON: SHOULD HOLLYWOOD DRAMATISE CRIMINAL CASES?

Ketrelle Danquah

Many people have a desire to experience the criminal and legal world safely from behind their screen through watching documentaries or dramas. However, to what extent should we allow Hollywood producers to fictionalise traumatic criminal cases?

By our very human nature, we enjoy mysteries and the thrill of solving a crime. This is one of the many reasons why true crime is one of the most watched forms of TV, one that has been steadily rising.



In a recent survey, it was found that 50% of Americans enjoy watching true crime, and 13% said that it is their favourite genre.

People are curious when it comes to the internal thought process of serial killers, kidnappers, and the legal justice system in general.

No matter what country you live in, crime is a part of your everyday life. Despite differences in cultural norms, we have all experienced some level of crime, ranging from shoplifting to crossing the street when the light is red (jaywalking). The media representation of crime plays a significant role in shaping our opinions, such as creating a moral panic with the belief that crime rates are rising.

Over the past few years, many producers have decided to retell famous murder stories either as documentaries or short dramas.

However, should we the consumers help Hollywood to profit on these criminal cases?

The producer Ryan Murphy has been criticised by many people for his work in the controversial series "Monster - the Jeffery Dahmer story" and "Monsters - The Lyle and Eric Menendez story".



When "Monster - The Jeffery Dahmer story" first came out on Netflix, it quickly became one of the most viewed TV shows. It is said to be one of the most viewed shows in Netflix's entire history, gaining 1 billion views in the first 60 days of its release. However, people started to scrutinise this documentary as they did not contact the victims of the families that the serial killer murdered. According to The Hollywood Reporter, Ryan Murphy claimed to have reached out to 20 of the victims' families, but none of them replied to him. The absence of permission should not have given him the right to continue the production of the series.

When producing a drama/documentary about real life events, it is important to get the individual's permission since you are dealing with their traumatic experience. By putting it on a global streaming network as vast as Netflix, the families were forced to relive the trauma of their young sons, brothers, and fathers being mercilessly killed through a dramatisation of their lives.

Moreover, Netflix used their creative liberties to fabricate false information for entertainment in the Dahmer and Menendez brothers cases that did not actually occur in real life.





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The Menendez brothers killed their parents, Kitty and José Menendez, in 1989 as a response to years of sexual abuse at the hands of their father.

The show reached 12.3 million views in its first weekend that it was released and is still in Netflix's Top 10 TV programmes. However, like 'Monster - The Jeffery Dahmer story', the show has received backlash for deceiving its viewers by pushing a false narrative that deviates from the truth. Erik Menendez wrote from prison to condemn the show, saying that it has 'horrible and blatant lies' and that its depiction of him and his brother are 'vile and appalling'. The drama decided to depict false scenes of incest between Eric and Lyle such as them sharing a shower sensually and kissing.

When discussing true crime, it is important to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of it. We have already seen how it can glamorise and misrepresent killers and victims' lives. Some argue that true crime is helpful in memorialising victims of gruesome crimes and helping to raise awareness. For example, the documentary 'Sarah Everard: The Search For Justice' explored how sadly Everard was failed by the UK police force. She was abducted in London, 2021, by a police officer who used his authority to trick Everard into getting into his car, claiming he was arresting her for breaking COVID-19 restrictions. It was later proven that after he kidnapped her, he raped and murdered her, trying to get rid of her body by setting it on fire inside of an old fridge. Through documentaries like these, they are not trying to glorify merciless killings, they are instead trying to raise awareness of what led to their killing, such as the failings of a corrupt institution.



This leaves us with the ultimate question: Should we continue to allow Hollywood to profit from the gruesome stories of criminal cases?.

Or, is it really us, the viewers, who are at fault as it is our own desires that producers try to sate?

To answer this question, we must debate whether the benefits of Hollywood helping to raise awareness of gruesome crimes outweighs their blatant misuse of their platform to twist the truth.

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INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

THE MYSTERY OF THE VOYNICH MANUSCRIPT: A LOST LANGUAGE OF ANCIENT CODE?

Truong Bao Ngoc

In 1912, Polish bookseller Wilfrid Voynich made a fateful encounter. While working through a collection of old books in the library of a Jesuit college, he accidentally discovered a manuscript bound in brown parchment, containing strange, undeciphered text and unusual illustrations of weird plants, astronomical symbols, and oddly-posed human figures. Even more queer, this manuscript – later named the Voynich Manuscript after the man who discovered it – has never been deciphered completely.

After recently being carbon-dated back to around 1420, the Voynich Manuscript captured even more attention from researchers and historians worldwide. Even today, this manuscript remains one of history's biggest mysteries. The key to why this manuscript still lies in the dark is that no one can figure out what was written in it. Several theories arise from this manuscript: some say that an unknown author or authors may have written it as a code, others conclude that it is just gibberish, and many believe it is simply a forgotten language that couldn't be decoded.

Theory 1: Written in gibberish

One of the reasons why people come to think the document was written in gibberish was because the structure of the text is rather abstract and doesn't portray a noticeable pattern. In natural languages, like English, there is phonetic consistency and grammatical rules. These factors make it easier for us to break down the structure of English and understand how a sentence is formed; therefore, we can memorize its pattern and speak it fluently. The words in the manuscript also seem to be formed out of random loops, which don't show any frequency of how often those loops are written. While, of course, there have been people who have pointed out a few recurring patterns and word-like clusters, the rate of recurrence for these clusters is far too little to jump to the conclusion that the manuscript was written in a real language. Instead, many argue that those recurring "words" and "sentences" are just there to give the false illusion of meaning.

Theory 2: Written as a code by a group of people or authors.

This theory suggests that a group of people created their own language and wrote this manuscript in code. There are notable patterns in the speech, and patterns are seen as a sign of language. Often, codes are built differently from normal language, so using the same grammatical rules wouldn't apply to codes. There is a theory that Voynich wrote the book itself, but it has been proven false with the carbon-dating back to 1420, far earlier than when Voynich found the book.

Other people have come up with ideas that the book itself wasn't written by a human, but rather by aliens or witches from the 15th century.



However, most of these ideas are still farfetched and have not yet been confirmed scientifically through studies or research. People who believe in these ideas are still determined to find out the true nature behind the manuscript itself.

Theory 3: It's written in a lost language

Most of the patterns found in the manuscript were very noticeable, as documented by Ted Ed. They are almost too noticeable.



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The patterns may indeed indicate some sort of code, but if it had been a code that shared such similarities to our modern language, why has it still not been decoded yet? Many believe that this supposed “similarity” is a sign that this is a real language instead of merely a code. Like the language on Easter Island, this could be a language that was popular in the early 15th century, but as time passed, the language became less popularized until it became impossible to decipher. The illustrations in the book are thought to be linked with this idea. The various pictures of suns, moons, humans, and odd plants could be interpreted as cultural uniqueness, or of the traditional beliefs of a certain people.



The true meaning

While the idea behind the Voynich Manuscript still hasn't been settled, there have been a few people who claim that they have decoded the manuscript. In 2019, David Cheshire – an academic in the UK – claimed to have finally decoded the manuscript. According to Arnet News, one panel of the manuscript depicts two women wrangling five children in a bath. The drawing is labeled with a word describing different temperaments; tozotr (buzzing: too noisy), orla la (on the edge: losing patience), toloro (silly/foolish), noror (cloudy: dull/sad), or aus (golden bird: well behaved), oleios (oiled: slippery).

His idea was that this was a document for women's rights and reproduction, written by a female author. However, most people doubted his method, due to the fact that even WW2 decipherers couldn't crack the code.

In 2020, a German Egyptologist named Rainer Hannig believed he had also cracked the manuscript. Hannig writes in an article in German explaining his methodology. “A lot of languages were proposed, such as Latin, Czech, or amongst others Nahuatl (spoken by the Aztecs), just to name a few... The word structure leaves only one possible explanation: the manuscript was not composed in an Indo-European language.” After identifying a connection between certain Voynich manuscript characters and Hebrew, he managed to translate the first words, and then full sentences. Unfortunately, he was unable to provide the full translation or explanation of the manuscript due to lack of time and money.

Some time ago, a writer named Nicolas Gibbs, claimed to have also translated the manuscript. It was supposed to be a mostly plagiarized book on women's health. According to him, it wasn't a code – it was just written in a way that would be easily readable to any medical professionals of the era. However, this “translation” was refuted by scientists themselves, and he was criticized for coming up with theories considering he was a TV producer without any actual background in linguistics.

In the past, many people have tried to get their hands on the manuscript and decode it. As people continue to claim that they have finally decrypted the language, most still fail and are doubted because of their methods. The manuscript, as it is, can be viewed differently from several perspectives. Depending on whether you believe in the translations or not, the manuscript could have different meanings for you. Alas, the mystery of the Voynich Manuscript lives on, waiting for its true translation to be brought into the light.

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INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

BEYOND THE CURRICULUM: THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN CLASSROOM INCLUSION

Samyuktha Radhika

From an early age, staying connected with your roots is essential in preserving your traditions, your *identity*. Yet, in many classrooms, cultural identity is often overlooked and ignored. In environments where students' cultures are not acknowledged or represented, their personal and/or cultural development can become stagnant. This article explores how cultural preservation in the classroom can be done, and why it matters.

Amidst all the chaos and conflict in the world, the classroom should serve as a safe space. A great teacher within can leave a lasting impression on every student; by helping them see how their cultural roots connect to the world around them. While the education system has made significant progress over the years, it still often fails to serve every student equally.



Many believe that if children want to grow up culturally engaged and proud of their heritage, cultural learning must be integrated into the curriculum.

A method known as **Culturally Responsive Teaching** has proven effective in achieving this goal. It emphasizes the value of incorporating cultural references in all forms of learning, empowering students to make connections and live in a way that honors their identities. Thaathwik Aarsha Abilash, a student who has benefited from culturally responsive teaching, shared his positive experience; "My school was very welcoming and open to many cultures, including Indian.



It made me feel comfortable expressing my heritage, especially on culture days when I could proudly wear my jubas." Culturally responsive teaching made him comfortable enough to embrace his culture through clothing expression - schools that embrace diversity in this way not only help students connect with their culture but also protect future generations from ignorance.

Similarly, Anjali Arat Tharakkal, a master's student, spoke about her opportunity to stay connected with her roots through cultural programs that represent her ethnicity. "We graduate students had a student body called SURABHI, which hosted events and celebrated Indian festivals," she said. Creating a community like this fosters a strong connection to one's heritage and encourages ongoing cultural engagement. Unfortunately, not all students are as fortunate as Thaathwik and Anjali.

The Role of the School Environment

It is not just the curriculum that affects cultural erasure or preservation—it is also the school environment. Events, policies, and attitudes all contribute to how students perceive and express their culture, much like Thaathwik's culture days and Anjali's student body. The lack of cultural responsiveness in schools can severely impact students. An anonymous student from Pakistan shared with me the challenges they faced: "My culture isn't often talked about in school. When it is, the conversation always reduces us to our food or mehendi. I wish people knew there's more to us than that." This highlights how culturally unresponsive teaching can lead to oversimplification and neglect of a student's cultural identity.

Avantika Jagdhari, a 16-year-old student from the United States, voiced similar frustrations: "I don't feel like my culture is accurately represented in school. We barely learn anything about Indian culture, and my school only started acknowledging Diwali as a holiday last year. There are also a lot of misconceptions about Indian culture, which can feel alienating." This illustrates how inadequate representation and understanding can make students feel disconnected and marginalized. Anjali echoed this sentiment, noting that "many traditions my parents' generation followed have faded over time. For example, we used to refrain from celebrating special occasions for a year after the death of a close relative, but this practice has become less common." The lack of culturally responsive teaching in schools not only fails to support students in maintaining their cultural practices but also contributes to the gradual erosion of these traditions.



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Samyuktha Radhika

The Impact of Language and Teacher Authority

Language is often the first victim of cultural marginalization. Many students feel pressure to conform to English as their primary language, even at home. This pressure is compounded when teachers misuse their authority to isolate or ridicule students for speaking their native languages. Another anonymous student shared a heartbreaking memory, stating:



“A teacher put me in a time-out corner simply for speaking my native language when I could barely speak English. It was so isolating. I cried my eyes out.”

Experiences like this reinforce the notion that some teachers target students based on race, causing a deeper disconnect between students and their ethnic backgrounds. Instead of this, teachers should encourage learning - even if it is in a language unused in the classroom. Studies have shown the importance of learning more than one language! Whether through music, movies, or other forms of entertainment, universal meanings can transcend language barriers. For example, a study by Elisa Perego found that “the processing of subtitled films is cognitively effective because it leads to a good understanding of film content without a significant tradeoff between image processing and text processing.”

The sad reality is that because of this racism, languages can be forgotten over time and cause disconnection.



This disconnect is something I can relate to personally. Over time, I completely forgot my first language—the language I’d known since birth—because I didn’t feel the desire to learn or use it anymore. Now, I struggle to communicate with my relatives and deeply regret not maintaining that connection.

Similarly, Avantika shared that while she can speak basic Hindi, she can neither read nor write in the Devanagari script, a reality faced by many second-generation students today.

The Importance of Names

Furthermore, names carry deep cultural significance, yet they are often mispronounced or shortened for convenience. Many students, including myself, have been conditioned to accept this, but it has a lasting impact. It can create a feeling of embarrassment and possibly shame. In fifth grade, my teacher consistently mispronounced my name despite months of being in her class. Eventually, she ‘gave up’ and shortened it to “Samy,” for her own ease; convenience. This has stuck with me for five years, and now, every time a teacher pauses while taking attendance, I immediately resort to saying, “You can just call me Samy.”

Although it is a small moment in the grand scheme of things, it represents the larger issue of how easily cultural identity can be glossed over or erased. Teachers should at least try to pronounce ethnic names correctly.

Conclusion

The preservation of cultural identity is something I hold dear because it provides representation that resonates with my community. Whether it’s Bharatanatyam or Día de Muertos, every tradition deserves to be acknowledged and celebrated. To achieve this, three key practices are essential: accurately pronouncing and respecting students’ names, implementing culturally responsive teaching, and encouraging language learning. Correctly pronouncing names honors students’ heritage and affirms their identity. Culturally responsive teaching integrates diverse cultural perspectives into the curriculum, ensuring that all students feel represented and valued. Encouraging language learning helps students maintain their cultural connections and deepens their understanding of different cultures. By embracing these practices, we can shape an educational environment that nurtures a generation that is accepting, open-minded, and proud of their heritage.

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INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

WHY CAN'T THE NEXT GENERATION READ?

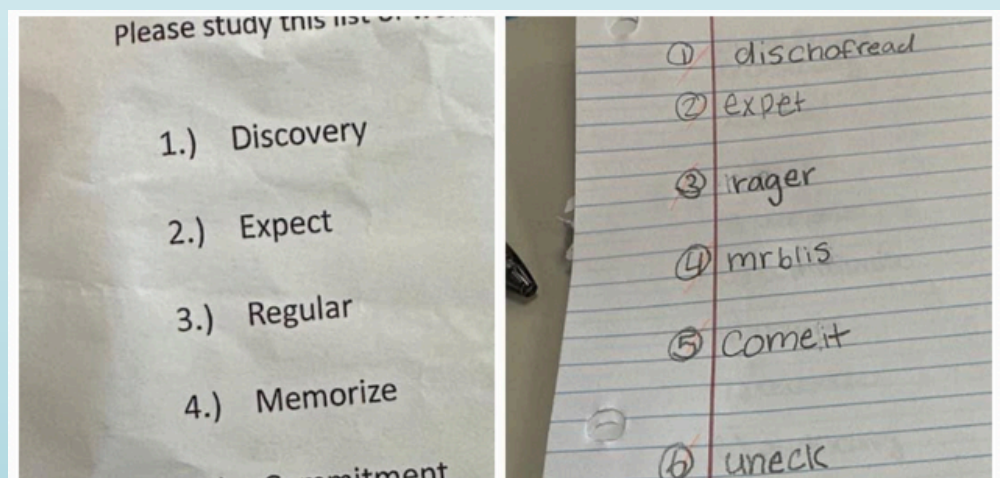
Helen Anderson



It's been a common theme on the internet lately that generation alpha, the generation born from 2010-2024, can't read. Teachers on social media, even those who have been teaching for decades, have reported that they've never seen such low performance in schools and that this generation is having unprecedented difficulty in basic skills such as reading, writing, and math.

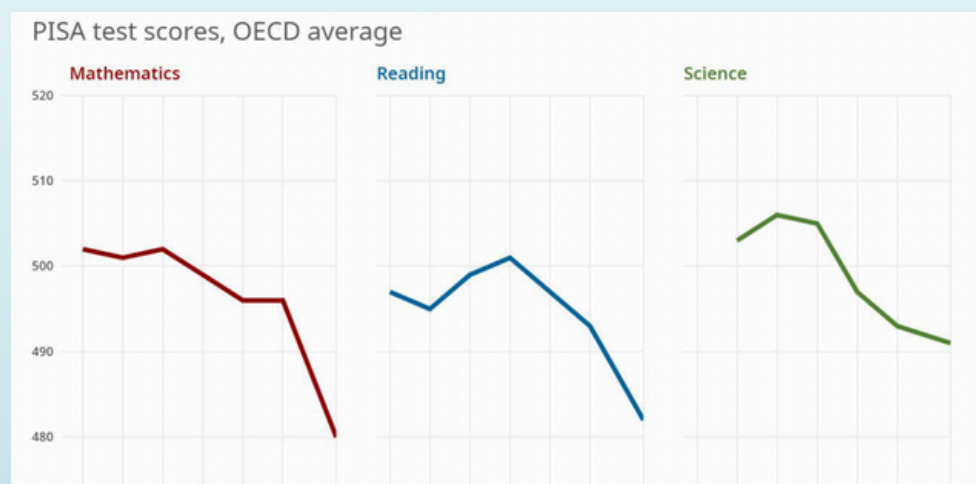
Test scores from the fall of 2022 showed that the average performances of 13 year-olds regressed back to levels from the 1970s, but why?

One of the main factors that people tend to blame is technology. Gen Alpha is the first ever generation that has been born in a completely digital era, and data shows that children ages 2-4 are getting an average of two and a half hours of screen time daily. This even goes up to three hours for ages 5-8. Although some think the current discussion around attention spans is exaggerated, there has been a trend over the years. A study found that in 2004, the average attention span was 2 and a half minutes, in 2012, 75 seconds, and in recent years, just 47 seconds. It would make sense that a generation of children raised on technology and with decreasing attention spans would be performing worse in school, as they are constantly distracted by their devices.



However, there are a lot of people opposed to this idea. Yes, there have been a large number of "iPad children" in recent years, however, the results of studies on the correlation between screen time and academic performance have been inconclusive. Some experts rather believe that this downturn is a direct result of Covid over anything else. With the roughly two years spent in lockdown and online learning, it not only allowed children to be behind on material and still slip past teachers, but it also prevented them from learning the basic social and emotional skills required for human interactions. Struggling to read isn't the only problem this generation is being accused of, as many teachers say that Generation Alpha is horribly behaved, rude, and disrespectful. Spending developmental years stuck inside could have prevented them from learning how to interact with others, especially when it comes to collaboration and manners.

Moreover, the question is not just about what the root of this problem is, devices or Covid, but whether or not it's even that serious. It's common knowledge that every generation is terrified of the generation after it. Older people are always worried about what's wrong with "kids these days" and then those kids will do the same thing to those who come after them. When books began to be widely distributed, parents were worried about how they would affect children, and a few decades later, parents were urging their children to read because television would ruin their minds. It's plausible to say that this is just another repetition of those same concerns, but the data is still there. Statistically, children have been performing worse, but it's unclear so far whether this will turn out to be a small hiccup, or a serious trend that's only going to worsen.



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UNLOCKING THE POWER OF WAQF: INVESTING IN SOCIETY

Alex Lo Storto

Waqf.org Definition: A sustainable, ongoing charitable endowment.

A **Waqf** is one of the most enduring forms of sadaqah jariyah¹ (continuous charity) in Islam, designed to provide ongoing support and lasting impact without the need for repeated donations. Rooted in Islamic tradition, a Waqf functions as a perpetual charitable fund where donated resources are strategically invested to generate consistent benefits for noble and community-focused causes.

I chose to explore the topic of Waqf because, as a Muslim, I have observed a growing stigma around investing within my community. Many of my friends, and even members of the broader Muslim community, have expressed concerns about the permissibility of investing, with some outright labeling it as haram (prohibited in Islamic law). This misunderstanding often leads to missed opportunities to align financial growth with Islamic principles. Through this article, I aim to shed light on Waqf as a powerful example of how investing can serve not only monetary objectives but also religious and community-driven goals. Waqf demonstrates that ethical and purposeful investment can deeply benefit society while remaining firmly rooted in Islamic values.

Types of Waqf

Waqf can be categorized into three main types—Religious, Philanthropic, and Family Waqf—each serving distinct purposes while collectively contributing to the spiritual, social, and economic welfare of the community².

Religious Waqf includes mosques and properties dedicated to their maintenance and operational expenses. This type of Waqf serves the spiritual and religious needs of the community, ensuring access to places of worship and related services for future generations.

Philanthropic Waqf is designed to benefit society at large by supporting public utilities such as parks, roads, and bridges, as well as social programs like education, healthcare, libraries, and scientific research.



“Imagine a field is donated as Waqf Fund. The community may use the field in a way that is beneficial - by planting fruits and vegetables. For instance, when ripe, the harvest will benefit the whole community. However, because nobody owns the field itself, the donation is ongoing and will support generation after generation.”
(Waqf.org)

It also addresses the needs of the poor and vulnerable. An example is the Waqf established by Uthman ibn Affan, who bought a well in Madinah and dedicated it to providing free water for the community.

Family Waqf is established to provide income or benefits to the founder’s family and descendants. Any surplus revenue from this type of Waqf is used to support charitable causes, such as aiding the poor. This form of Waqf reduces the burden on future social welfare systems while ensuring long-term familial security.



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Socioeconomic Impact of Waqf

The socioeconomic impact of Waqf is extensive, addressing societal and economic challenges through sustainable resource allocation for public benefit. As Sadeq (1987) highlights, the Islamic concept of human welfare is 'more comprehensive than economic welfare alone', with Waqf serving as a vital instrument for wealth redistribution, employment generation, and infrastructure development³. Waqf reduces government expenditures and borrowing, as noted by Cizakca (1998), who argues that it leads to 'significant reductions in government expenditure and borrowing', enabling alternative uses of tax revenues for public goods³. Moreover, Waqf addresses poverty's multiple dimensions, including hunger, healthcare, education, and housing, providing tangible benefits that many modern states struggle to achieve.



Waqforever⁴ highlights the intersection of Waqf and real estate investment as a means of supporting charitable efforts, particularly in Gaza. By investing in UK properties, Waqforever ensures a sustainable flow of income, with proceeds directed towards humanitarian relief, healthcare, education, and other essential services.



As real estate generates steady returns, this reduces reliance on traditional donations. This approach leverages the stability of the property market to create a perpetual funding source for ongoing aid, demonstrating how a single donation can impact many generations to come!

Conclusion

In conclusion, Waqf offers a powerful model for combining ethical investment with social impact. It shows that investing, when aligned with Islamic principles, can generate lasting financial growth while also benefiting society for generations to come.

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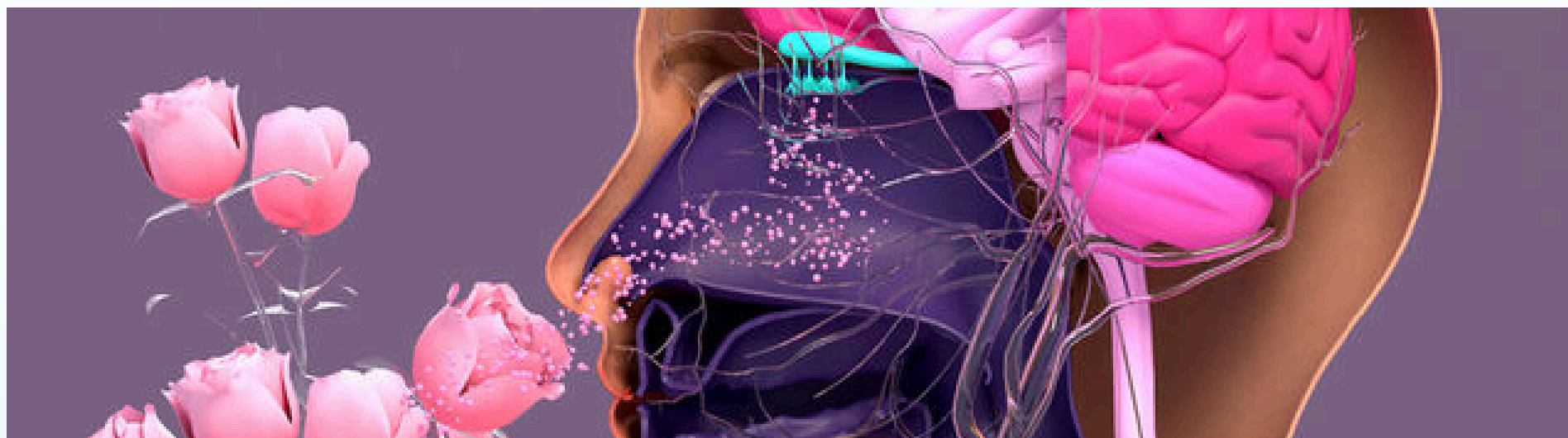
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PHENOMENA OF OLFACTORY MEMORY AND ITS POTENTIAL TO DETECT NEUROLOGICAL DISORDERS

Sarah Fathi



Key definitions:

Biomarker: A biomarker is a characteristic that can be objectively measured and evaluated as an indicator of normal biological processes, pathogenic processes or pharmacological responses to a therapeutic intervention.

Olfactory Memory: Refers to the recollection of odors. Studies have found various characteristics of common memories of odor including persistence and high resistance to interference.

Olfactory Memory and the Proust Effect

Olfactory memory—otherwise known as odor-evoked memory—is commonly referred to as the "Proust effect phenomenon" (Jellinek J. S. 2004). It is named after Marcel Proust's novel "In Search of Lost Time" that describes the scent and taste of madeleines to transport the narrator back to his childhood (Proust, M. 1928). Olfactory memory is the recollection of a memory or multiple strings of memories, triggered by a specific scent. The process involves the brain's capability to process, encode, and store scents, primarily utilising the hippocampus and olfactory bulb.

Short-Term and Long-Term Olfactory Memory

The paper "Olfactory Memory: The Long and Short of It" (White, 1998) reviews the nature of olfactory memory, proposing that it consists of short-term and long-term components, similar to other sensory memory systems.

White 1998, a study on verbal and perceptual components in short-term memory (White et al., 1998), conducted two experiments using odourant triads as stimuli. Each triad included a target odor which could be substituted in memory by either similar verbal labels or similar olfactory cues; verbal foils, which were distinct in scent but had names resembling the target odour, and odour foils, which had similar scents but different names. An analysis of the errors subjects made while trying to remember the target odour showed that a substantial part of short-term olfactory memory relies on how it was perceived by their senses, although there was also evidence of verbal processing involved.

Overall, these experiments indicate that the perceptual characteristics of an odour play a key role in performance on short-term memory tasks.

Research on long-term memory for odours has suggested that a substantial number of odour-evoked memories can be retained over extended periods, although some loss in memory typically occurs due to insufficient first encoding.

Olfactory Memory and Neurological Disorders

Given the extensive ability of both short-term and long-term olfactory memory, it becomes fitting to explore how these systems might be disrupted in the initial stages of neurological disorders. Alterations in olfactory memory, as shown by research in patients with conditions such as Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease, could thus serve as early biomarkers, indicating underlying neurological changes before more conspicuous symptoms develop over time.

Challenges in Diagnosing Neurological Disorders

Despite advancing medical technology in today's society, challenges in identifying and diagnosing neurological disorders still pose a consistent issue. Neurological disorders all stem from affecting the intricate nature of the nervous system as well as the peripheral nervous system, which extends to all parts of the body.



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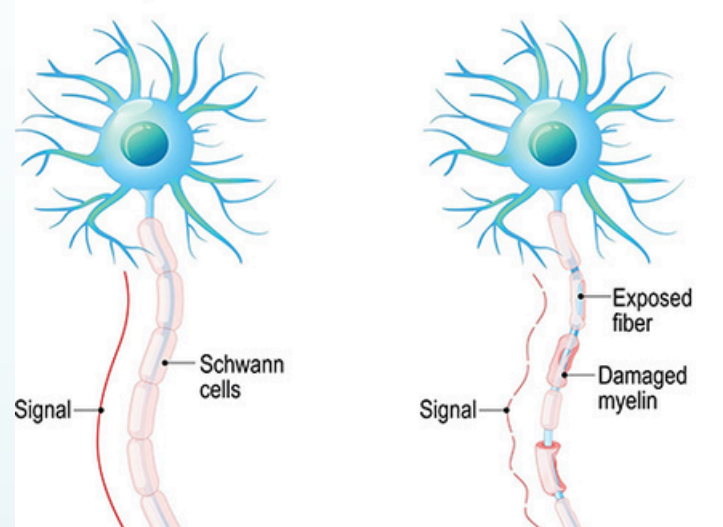
Sarah Fathi

Neurological disorders like Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, and schizophrenia, among others, present with symptoms like lack of spatial awareness, memory loss, and impaired cognition (Das 2020). These early symptoms can be vague, making specific diagnoses challenging for clinicians. As a result, the gradual onset and progression of such diseases often lead to delayed identification and diagnosis, which allows the disease to advance to more severe stages before being detected, further diminishing the remaining quality of a patient's life.

Therefore, early diagnosis is crucial.

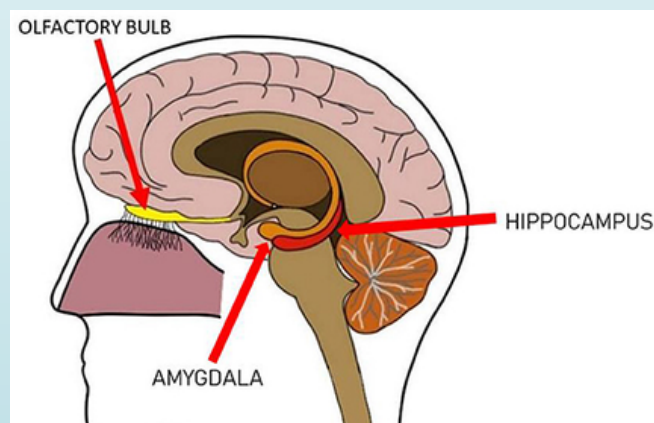
However with the current lack of diagnostic tests for neurological disorders medical histories, physical examinations and scans are relied on in making a diagnosis. These methods can fall short of providing adequate results because they struggle to detect subtle changes in brain function or structure that can occur before more recognizable symptoms appear.

Multiple Sclerosis



Olfactory Memory as a Biomarker

Due to these limitations, research into potential biomarkers has shown importance and has indicated that it could play a role in improving the accuracy of future diagnoses. Despite this research still being an ongoing process, a promising field of research is the role of olfactory memory as an early biomarker in the progression of neurological disorders.



Research has indicated that deficits in olfactory memory may be one of the earliest signs of neurological decline.

Progression of Alzheimer's Disease



The olfactory system's unique connection to brain regions involved in memory and cognition suggests that olfactory memory could serve as an early indicator of neurodegeneration, which can bring value towards clinicians making early diagnosis in certain neurological disorders such as Alzheimer's disease.

Conclusion

Overall, the comprehension and understanding of these olfactory memory deficits is important for a multitude of reasons. The potential for them to be used as an early indicator of certain neurological disorders can help in making early diagnosis and therefore intervening before disastrous outcomes. Encouragement for research could potentially also open new avenues in the development of more effective treatments in such diseases as the underlying causes of certain disorders could be made by more extensive research into olfactory and cognitive impairments.

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UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF SUO MOTO COGNISANCE IN THE INDIAN JUDICIAL SYSTEM

Mahathi Sathish

A country home to over a billion people is bound to have innovative mechanisms to uphold a sense of law and order. One of these frameworks that is the most unique is the power warranted by Articles 32 and 142 of the Indian Constitution, *Suo Moto Cognisance*.

Suo Moto Cognisance (or suo moto, for short) refers to the Indian Judiciary's power to take up legal affairs "on its own motion", without the need for a proper petition to be filed.

The core principles of this practice have their roots in 'Epistolary Jurisdiction', which aims to make justice a more inclusive and equal outcome that rightfully should not be denied based on monetary values.

There are three chief reasons why the Indian Justice System, including both the High Courts and the Supreme Court of India, might open a case *suo moto*. The first one revolves around the contempt of the court, wherein the system has the power to investigate a government administrative official who they believe has compromised the integrity of the working systems of the Court. The second situation where a High Court or Supreme Court might opt for *Suo Moto Cognisance* is when they believe there needs to be an order probe for a new case, wherein it is seen that a particular individual or group of people are mistreated by some governing body or institution. In this situation, the Court might even rely on news and media outlets, or direct correspondence through official letters addressed to them from the affected party in order to make their decision. Finally, the third circumstance for the Court to open a case *suo moto* is when new information is unearthed about a resolved legal matter that demands further investigation.



Between the years 1990 and 2021 alone, the Supreme Court of India took up around 46 cases *suo moto*, with the earliest in 1994, looking at the rising levels of pollution in the Yamuna River. The Court further took up a maximum number of 10 such cases in a year during the pandemic in 2020 to understand the sudden surge of COVID-19-related mortality and develop a more thorough medical supplies plan, starting with an order to form a national policy on their distribution. Since then, five more such orders have been put out that greatly helped mitigate much of the damage caused to rural regions during the pandemic and aided in the vaccination policy hence formed.

The role of the Supreme Court in taking up a case *Suo Moto*, was further seen in the recent nationwide protests following the brutal rape and murder of a 31-year-old resident doctor in the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital of Kolkata. The gut-wrenching incident invoked a mass surge of protests and strikes by medical professionals all around the country, plunging many institutions into disarray and forcing the public into action. With some alleged evidence and crime scene tampering accused on the Police Department as well, the decision of the Supreme Court to look over the case came with much support.

In a statement made during one of the first proceedings of the case, the Court justified its decision by stating that "this is not just a case of a horrific murder in a Kolkata hospital but is also about the systemic issue about the safety of doctors across India".

The Supreme Court went on to ask "What is equality under the Constitution if women cannot be safe in their workplace?" - an example of a question that flared amongst citizens both online and offline, and lay at the heart of the raging protests.

While this interesting proceeding and particular of the Indian Constitution has attracted much support, it has also met critics who believe that the Supreme Court, by intervening in situations without a call, tamper with the checks and balance mechanisms of the Court of Law and render them futile. Some also generate debate by questioning how the Court comes to a conclusion on which cases to open, and which injustices to pass by on.

These questions on the overall effectiveness of the role of *Suo Moto Cognisance* in India have sparked, and continue to spark debate on the extent to which bureaucracy and decision-making authorities can foster justice in the world's largest democracy. To conclude, while we cannot exactly rank whether this provision has done more harm than good, the *Suo Moto Cognisance* is almost essential to the sustenance of the Indian Judicial System, as it helps one believe that justice is never too far away and therefore, can never be denied.



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